

# LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 12/02/2024

**Subject:** Strengthening Education Provision in Hammersmith and Fulham

**Report of:** Councillor Alex Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Children and Education

**Report author:** Peter Haylock, Operational Director Education and SEND

**Responsible Director:** Jacqui McShannon, Strategic Director Children's Services

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## SUMMARY

The Strengthening Education Provision in Hammersmith & Fulham plan outlines the steps that are needed to support sustainable primary school provision across the borough. Its recommendations were developed by a steering group consisting of the council and its education partners, including school leaders, local academy trusts, unions and other key stakeholders.

Over several years there has been a significant reduction in primary school pupil numbers. This has been caused by several factors, including a significant decrease in the birth rate. This issue is a national issue and more acute in the Greater London region.

The impact of falling rolls is significant for schools as funding is provided for schools on a per pupil basis. This means that if there are fewer pupils in a school there will be less funding to the school to provide the education for all pupils.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To approve the Strengthening Education Provision in Hammersmith and Fulham attached at Appendix 1.
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**Wards Affected:** All

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<b>Our Values</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the H&amp;F Values</b>
Building shared prosperity	Ensuring a sustainable primary school provision across Hammersmith & Fulham so that all young people can succeed.
Creating a compassionate council	Securing, maintaining and future proofing the good and outstanding education provision in Hammersmith &

	Fulham for the benefit of children and young people.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Listening and responding to feedback from Hammersmith & Fulham education partners, including co-producing the plan.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Building a sustainable primary school economy that continues to deliver good outcomes and is financially sustainable.
Taking pride in H&F	Delivers the vision of ensuring children and young people lead happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives and achieve their life goals.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	The plan will provide certainty to primary school partners and support a planned approach to improving the condition of schools, including carbon mitigation initiatives.

## Financial Impact

There are no direct financial implications for Council resources as a result of this plan. The approach will assist with sustainable delegated budgets in line with the National Funding Formula for mainstream schools which are funded in relation to the numbers of pupils on roll.

*Financial implications completed by Tony Burton, Head of Finance, Children's Services and Education, 08 January 2024.*

*Verified by Sukvinder Kalsi, Strategic Director of Finance, 02 February 2024.*

## Legal Implications

The proposals outlined in the report comply with section 13 of the Education Act 1996 which places a duty on a Local Authority to ensure sufficient primary and secondary education provision is available to meet the needs of the population in its area.

*Implications completed by Jade Monroe, Chief Solicitor, Social Care. 29 December 2023.*

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## Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

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## DETAILED ANALYSIS

### Proposals and Analysis of Options

1. Hammersmith & Fulham schools have a strong track record of educational success. In December 2023, 100% of Hammersmith & Fulham schools were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. The continued strong performance of our schools has consistently delivered outcomes for Hammersmith & Fulham pupils above the national average in both primary and secondary schools.
2. The local authority has a responsibility to ensure that we have an appropriate primary school organisation plan that can support all schools to meet the needs of all children and young people. There has been action taken by H&F and local partners in partnership and consultation to address the declining school roll challenge which are outlined within the paper.
3. This paper sets out a series of recommendations developed by a Steering Group consisting of the council and its education partners, including school leaders, local academy trusts, unions and other key stakeholders to ensure that our primary school provision is sustainable both in terms of maintaining academic standards and financially:

No	Recommendation
1	Reduce the overall PAN in a phased approach. The initial phase should reduce PAN to approximately 1400 by September 2024, with the potential to implement a second phase from September 2025 and / or September 2026 if Reception cohort projections remain at or below 1200.
2	That the use of temporary capping is not an appropriate medium-term strategy to manage the reduction in demand for primary school places and that formal reductions in PAN should be progressed.
3	That consultations should take place on PAN reductions at schools that have been capped for Reception entry in September 2023, with the caveat that there should remain at least one secular two form entry option in each locality.
4	That amalgamation should be considered before closure to provide greater certainty and continuity for pupils. The Steering Group considers that amalgamation or closure of schools should only be considered in the following circumstances: (a) Where school specific circumstances, which may relate to leadership, educational provision, or financial sustainability, suggest to the local authority, Diocese or academy trust as appropriate that the school may not remain viable; or (b) Where there are not appropriate options within the locality to reduce PAN so that there is a projected surplus of less than 15%.
5	That the future reduction in PAN should approximately reflect the relative size of the secular, Church of England, and Catholic provision. No reduction in Church of England provision is required as two forms of entry was removed with the closure of Ark Burlington Danes Primary. However, the reduction in Catholic provision is required.

6	<p>In support of our H&amp;F school workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ That the LA and other responsible bodies should provide support for school leadership teams to develop medium-term financial and HR strategies where the PAN is proposed to reduce.</li> <li>▪ All schools in H&amp;F, irrespective of status should give interviews to suitable applicants from H&amp;F schools that are formally reducing in size (i.e., following a PAN reduction) or which are proposed for amalgamation or closure.</li> <li>▪ A responsible body proposing closure of a school should ensure that the school continues to have effective leadership during the period of closure and provides support to staff for securing future roles.</li> </ul>
7	<p>That any actions should take place within the specific localities identified and that these would need to be coproduced with key stakeholders.</p>

### **Option 1 – Approve and publish the H&F Strengthening Education Provision in Hammersmith (Recommended)**

4. The plan sets out a strategic approach to strengthening primary education provision in H&F. This option is recommended.

### **Option 2 – Do not approve and publish the H&F Strengthening Education Provision in Hammersmith (Not recommended)**

5. This option will not result in the delivery of the local area priorities for improving the life chances of children and young people through the delivery of high-quality education provision. Delaying the recommendations co-produced by education partners is likely to have an adverse impact on local primary schools and their continued delivery of good and outstanding provision, as well as outcomes for H&F children and young people. This option is not recommended.

### **Reasons for Decision**

6. This decision is required in dispensation of H&F's responsibility to ensure the sufficiency of primary school places.

### **Equality Implications**

7. There are no direct negative equality implications for groups with protected characteristics, under the Equality Act 2010, by the approval of the plan to strengthen primary education provision in H&F.

### **Risk Management Implications**

8. The report recommends adopting and approving the recommendations made in the Strengthening Education Provision in Hammersmith & Fulham plan, which has been co-produced with key stakeholders including, headteachers, unions, local academy trusts and other responsible bodies. The plan aims to address the issue and risks associated with falling school pupil numbers in primary schools with a view to working with schools and school leaders to support sustainable

primary school provision across the borough. This is in line with the Council's objectives.

*David Hughes, Director of Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance, 8 January 2024*

## **Climate and Ecological Emergency Implications**

The recommendation provides a plan to develop a suitable model for primary school provision in H&F. This will provide certainty for school partners and support medium to long-term planning. This will also support the ongoing work by the H&F Education Service and Climate Emergency Unit to co-produce a schools decarbonisation plan with our H&F schools.

Approved by Hinesh Mehta, Assistant Director Climate Change, 20/12/2023.

## **Consultation**

The strengthening education provision plan was co-produced via a Steering Group including primary and secondary headteachers from across the sector; unions; academy trusts and other responsible bodies for schools in H&F.

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Strengthening Education Provision in Hammersmith and Fulham